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See also NOA #20, Oct. 1995.

The Impact of Culture on Multicultural Team Development by Linda Kok,

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East Meets West in Business Meetings*

Joe Kok

Cross-cultural adjustments are necessary even in business meetings where people of different cultures are participants. This paper addresses the differences between Asian and Western cultures as they relate to cultural background and concepts of leadership. Suggestions are made from the viewpoint of the Asian participant.

Cross-cultural adjustments are part of life! We expect them when we get off the plane, set foot on the host country's soil or return to our home country. But coming to Asia Area meetings should be different. We see old friends, renew fellowship, and discuss issues. We do not expect to face cross-cultural differences in our committee meetings as well.

There has been discussion about different styles of communication, reflecting different cultural backgrounds in the Asia Area Committee. I was requested to facilitate some interaction on this issue. Please understand that whenever I mention Asian members or Western colleagues, I am generalizing. I am an Asian, but I have lived in North America for about 10 years. I will present here the Asian perspective on business meetings.

Differences between West and East

Different Expectations

Our Western members meet mainly to work on issues, with the goal of reaching a majority opinion. Asian members gather to meet each other. The one is problem/issue oriented, the other, people oriented. This is a basic difference.

For our Western members, it is important to share different views in order to make policies. Most Asians have a different approach. Reaching the best decisions is often not the most important point. For example, they may carry out test trials before making a policy. Then, even after successful experimentation, they may not choose to accept the policy.

*At the time of writing Joe Kok was chairman of the Hong Kong Mycliffe council and pastoring a church in Hong Kong. He is now living in Canada.

It is difficult for Asians to be the opposition in a meeting. Casting a negative vote is not easy. Arguing on a tabled motion may also arouse fear of division and disunity in the body. It is easy to see a confrontation or challenge as a personal attack. Of course, Asians have their bias. They believe arguments almost always generate more heat than light.

Different Concepts of Leadership

The ideal leader in Asian thought is still seen as someone who takes care of the family, makes decisions after consultation, and takes responsibility for those decisions. He rules out of love for the people, always taking his flock into consideration. The ruling judge (local governor) of the Chinese people in the past is a good example. His mission was to be like father and mother to his people. The responsibility of the leader is to care for the people. The responsibility of the follower is to obey and submit to the leader.

Why do we Asians prefer this system? Because we give weight to leadership, rather than to majority opinion. Because it is efficient. Because we feel we can trust our leaders. Because to us stability and unity are of higher value than the right to be heard. Because we would like to avoid favoritism, caused by the difficulty of distinguishing between the approved motion and the approved mover, thus causing factions and jealousy.

So what do we do? We let the leader table a motion and that takes the heat off other members. Usually the motion is a product of individual premeeting consultation with members, a compromise incorporating various opinions. The purpose of the meeting is to arrive at a consensus. After all, what good is the decision if there is no consensus?

The Committee Chairman

To our Western members, the chairman's role is to chair meetings and look after the order of business. For them, the chairman cannot be chairman without knowing the rules. However, for Asians, the chairman cannot be chairman without knowing the people!

So, the chairman needs to know the people and know where they stand on issues. You may ask, "How can he be expected to know, especially when there are many members?" That is a good question, and it has a simple answer. That is why they spend so much time eating and sharing.

The task of the chairman is to incorporate various opinions and rally support through informal meetings and discussions. If consensus cannot be reached, the chairman and/or assistant leaders will meet with individuals again to find an acceptable decision. Someone asked me how the leader knows when they have a consensus. I said, "You have to be able to feel it to be a leader."

At times there may be arguments. Members will feel hurt and sense disunity. If the chairman cannot control the situation, his leadership will be undermined. He will be seen as unable to lead the group. Asian chairmen know well that a meeting is not the most important event, premeeting dinners are. Frankly, we Asians have a lot to learn about conducting business meetings. I have seen how discussions and amendments improve the quality of a motion both in Asia Arca committee meetings and at International Conference. I would like to see more of that in our organization meetings.

Recommendations

The suggestions I make here to Asians as well as to Western leaders are meant to encourage more participation of Asian participants in business meetings.

My fellow Asians and members who are less verbal than the others, speak up courageously when you have a valuable contribution. Learn Robert's *Rules of Order*. A few Asian members have expressed to me that it is hard to know when to speak or whether they should raise their hands. We need to know the rules to play the game.

For those who are Western leaders, plan for premeeting consultation or sharing. If done in genuineness, relationships will be built. The individual will feel you understand his situation. He will understand your position and why you prefer it. Asking for his opinion shows respect and is usually enough to get his support.

Make efforts to take care of the negative ramifications of a decision. Often a vote is avoided because we feel responsible as decision makers to take care of people's feelings and safeguard relationships. Usually the chairman takes initiative to look after those who may be affected negatively by the resolution. He gains respect through his willingness and sensitivity to care for members. (That also explains why consensus is preferred to a logical solution that may hurt a few.)

Use small group discussions. The group size is an important factor. The more people there are, the harder it is for Asians to speak up. Encourage members to speak in their mother tongues with translation. Present an issue fully, then have an "amendment break." People can exchange opinions in a casual setting and suggest amended proposals. Create a less formal atmosphere. Asians tend to be very careful with their words in formal settings. Saying something incorrect will result in a lack of respect from colleagues and diminished credibility for future opinions. In my experience, green light sessions are good for encouraging good participation from Asian members.

Do not expect Asian members to give opinions on subjects irrelevant to them or in areas in which they have little experience. I choose not to speak up unless it affects the W/O side of our teamwork significantly, or unless I have an extremely important point to make.

On the other hand, ask specifically for opinions if you are certain someone has a good point.

I hope my words have stimulated us all to explore how we can build better relationships between Asian and Western members. Then, by God's grace, we can move from relationship to understanding, from understanding to consensus, from consensus to cooperation and finally, from cooperation to unity in working towards our common goal.

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viewed their primary caregivers at the boarding school as "parents," tended to reflect a greater sense of overall well-being than those who saw their caregivers as a "disciplinarian," "counselor," or "friend."

"Disciplinarians" may have been more punitive toward the MKs, and caregivers who were viewed as a "friend" may have promoted a diffusion of boundaries, which can confuse maturing children and adolescents.

While most of the respondents had positive experiences with their boarding home parents, some were quite negative. One respondent wrote, "My dorm mother was a lost cause. I might not have even been there from all the attention she gave me."

Another has taken years to move into healing:

The bitterness and resentment have been very deep indeed. After all of those years . . . I was finally able to talk to my parents about some of my early childhood horrors at the hands of missionary dorm parents. The damage, denied and suppressed for so long, is now being dealt with and worked through. I've often wondered what became of the other little boys who shared my hell.

It would appear that other persons in the community of faith can function as competent surrogate parents, especially if a proper foundation has been established at home prior to boarding school.

On the other hand, findings seem to indicate that no matter how nurturing the boarding school environment may be, if the parent-child relationship is not strong the MK will not do as well as an adult.

It should encourage parents to know that when the family bond is

strong and intact, and the boarding school provides a positive nurturing environment, they can reasonably expect that their children will not face any long-term damage. In fact, they will likely associate positive values with their education.

As one respondent wrote:

The quality of my boarding school . . . primarily determined by the caliber of staff and their personal walks with the Lord was a major positive influence in the person I am today. That along with the unconditional love I was assured by my parents are definitely paramount to who I am.

Factors connected with a boarding school experience that had no significant affect on the MKs' overall sense of well-being were: (1) location of the school (rural, small town, or urban setting); (2) type of accommodations (dormitory or family style); (3) number of adults or house-parents serving in the boarding school; (4) size of school; (5) distance of school from home; and (6) number of home visits.

Mission culture

How much does the mission culture in which an MK grows up influence their sense of well-being as an adult? Of the adult MKs surveyed, 17.4 percent are now career missionaries. Furthermore, many have been involved in short-term missionary experiences.

While connection to a specific mission does not seem to be related to the respondent's current spiritual functioning as an adult, a variety of quality indicators within the mission are related.

For example, the more warm and close the interaction between the respondent's family and other

missionary families tended to be, the greater was the reported sense of existential, religious, and spiritual well-being. Respondents who feel that other families in the mission were concerned about them when they were sick or in trouble also show higher levels of well-being.

However, if missionaries were critical or indifferent to the way in which the MK's family chose to live their lives, respondents tend to display lower levels of well-being than those who viewed their mission more favorably.

The overall quality of care provided by the mission, as perceived by these adult MKs, also relates to higher levels of well-being. So does nonmonetary support afforded the family.

There was, however, no significant correlation between the respondents' sense of well-being and whether or not the MK received specific help from his or her mission for college finances.

Cohesion and adaptability within the mission, as perceived by the survey respondents, are also positively related to their current sense of well-being.

Cohesion refers to such things as emotional bonding, family boundaries, coalitions, time, space, friends, decision making, and inter-

est and recreation. It can range from "disengaged" to "separated but connected" to "enmeshed." Adaptability includes "assertiveness," "leadership," "discipline," "negotiation," "roles," and "rules," and can range from "rigid" to "flexible and structured" to "chaotic." When examined in tandem with interaction among missionary families, it is not surprising that cohesion and adaptability

would be related in some way to the well-being of adult MKs.

The climate within the mission, as assessed by the survey respondents, for the time they were growing up, yielded positive associations in five areas.

1. **Rewards.** This represents the degree to which the MKs felt missionaries were recognized and rewarded for good work rather than ignored, criticized, or punished when something went wrong.

2. **Warmth and support.** Warmth and support is the feeling that friendliness is a valued norm in the mission; that missionaries trust one another and offer support to one another; and that good relationships prevail in the work environment.

3. **Leadership.** This area reflects the willingness of a member of the mission to accept leadership and direction from qualified others. As the need for leadership arose, missionaries felt free to assume leadership roles and were rewarded for successful leadership, which was usually based upon expertise.

4. **Organizational clarity.** This area depicts the feeling among missionaries that things were well organized and goals were clearly defined rather than being disorderly, confused, or chaotic.

5. **Responsibility.** This area indicates that missionaries were given personal responsibility to achieve their part of the mission's goals, as well as the degree to which they felt that they could make decisions and solve problems without checking with superiors each step of the way.

Finally, the more warm and close, in contrast to cold and distant, an adult MK now feels about the relationships formed with the

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The Impact of Culture on Multicultural Team Development

Sandi Ray

The development of teams is affected by the different cultural backgrounds of team members. This paper reviews the literature concerning the convening, crisis, and cohesion stages of development in teams, with examples given from a number of cultures. Such information should help teams to assess the cross-cultural issues in order to develop the best in interpersonal relationships and task performance.

Introduction

Groups interacting and working together to accomplish particular tasks is a concept that pervades society. From early hunters and gatherers to present-day complex organizations, the value of cooperative efforts to achieve desired results has been recognized. What has also been evident throughout history is that sometimes these groups function well together and sometimes they do not. Much research has been devoted recently to the nature of these groups, how they develop and what makes these work groups effective teams. One area of research that has received less attention is the impact of diverse cultural backgrounds on multicultural teams. This is a phenomenon which is becoming more prevalent in multicultural organizations within a multicultural world. The purpose of this paper is to review literature concerning the elements necessary to the development of a successful work team and to understand the potential impact of culture on those elements. Team effectiveness in literature is measured in terms of both task effectiveness and interpersonal or process effectiveness. The focus of this review of literature will be the latter.

Sandi Ray is also an international team development consultant in Dallas. Her B.A. degree in Anthropology and Sociology is from California State University in Bakersfield.

assumptions going into the relationship, and the similarity of approaches to forming those relationships.

Teams are commonly defined in terms of components essential to their existence. Combining the essential elements of teams from the literature, I would like to propose the following definition for the purpose of this paper:

A team is an organized group of two or more individuals who perceive themselves as a team, and are committed to working together interdependently towards a shared purpose and goal because they believe this is the best means to accomplish the task. Individuals will bring personal and cultural diversity to the group, resulting in unique interpersonal dynamics for any given team.

This definition describes a mature team, one which has successfully gone through a developmental process.

Team Development

It is generally agreed that a team goes through various stages before reaching a point where it is functioning effectively. However, descriptions of what these stages include vary significantly in the literature.

Each of these approaches to team development mentioned in the literature has a basis in observation and research, and yet they all provide a slightly different perspective. It would seem that the organizational environment, particular circumstances, and nature of a particular team may determine the developmental process. What is common to all of those approaches is that the quality and effectiveness of a mature team will depend on how well they have dealt with developmental issues.

In order to address developmental issues and the ways in which culture will influence team development, this paper will address those stages of team development leading up to effective teamwork. I am enlisting these stages: 1) Convening; 2) Crisis; and 3) Cohesion.

Stage 1: Convening

No matter which theory of team development one chooses to adapt, the first stage focuses on those initial interactions: forming relationships, testing interpersonal and task boundaries, and getting acquainted with personalities, attitudes and abilities.

Forming Relationships. Any time an individual forms a relationship, there is a dialectical tension between that person, as an individual, and the interdependent association he/she is attempting to make (Cronen and Shuter 1983). The degree of that tension will vary depending on the accuracy of one's

primarily as an individual, and then as part of a group. In other cultures, a person is always part of some larger group. This basis of personal identification, in turn, determines the nature of interpersonal relationships within a team. On the one hand you have independent individuals who work together based on *explicit* mutual agreement. On the other hand, you have interdependent relations among people who work within a context of *unstated* mutual expectations and obligations (Condon 1984:64).

Cronen and Shuter point out that the process of forming relationships varies among cultures. Cultures have a structured set of "interpersonal rules guiding relationship formation that appears to affect such factors as the amount and type of interpersonal disclosure and the frequency and content of interpersonal questions" (1983:91). One example of this would be the differences between the development of American versus European personal relationships. Americans are seen as very friendly and outgoing and making friends fairly easily. Europeans often view these relationships as being somewhat informal and superficial in nature. Europeans, on the other hand, take a much longer time to develop friendships, and Americans may view them as cold or too formal. But once these friendships have solidified, they are highly valued (Hall and Hall 1990). Another example would be the difference between Japanese and Americans in the way they deal with uncertainty in new relationships:

In the white, middle-class subculture of the United States, we try to obtain information about others' attitudes, feelings and beliefs to reduce our uncertainty. In Japan, on the other hand, people must know others' status and background in order to reduce uncertainty and know which version of the language to use. [Gudykunst 1991:97]

Time. Various cultures will structure and use time differently. Hall and Hall (1990) discuss perception and use of time based on either a monochronic or a polychronic scale. Those cultures high on a monochronic scale will perceive time on a linear basis and tend to compartmentalize their lives. Schedules will be important, and individuals will tend to focus on one thing at a time. Individuals high on the monochronic scale will be irritated by interruptions. Germans are very high on the monochronic scale, with Americans just a little lower. The French, on the other hand, are high on the polychronic scale. They can be involved with many things at once. Schedules and deadlines are not as important as involvement with people, therefore they tolerate interruptions quite well (Hall and Hall 1990).

In the beginning stages of team development, these different perceptions of time could be problematic. In setting interpersonal and task boundaries, individuals high on the monochronic scale, would probably focus more on task issues and those high on the polychronic scale would focus more on interpersonal issues. Those high on the monochronic scale may perceive those on the polychronic scale as being irresponsible. Those high on the polychronic scale may perceive those on the monochronic scale as being intolerant and inflexible.

Space. Another underlying structure of culture is perception and use of space. Hall and Hall (1990) refer to the "invisible bubble" of personal space surrounding individuals. The size of this bubble is, to a great extent, culturally determined. Cultures which tend to have large bubbles and keep people at a distance include Northern Europe and North America. The bubbles are smaller in Southern France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Middle East and Latin America (Hall and Hall 1990; Harris and Moran 1987). Even where there is general agreement on issues of territoriality, for instance, among the Germans and Americans, differences are evident. The German sense of privacy is much greater than that of Americans—space is seen as sacred. Formal rules are designed to ensure that distance and privacy are protected (Hall and Hall 1990). If formality ensures distance, one can understand why the Germans are uncomfortable with American informality. The French, Middle Easterners, Latin Americans, among others, have a very small bubble of personal space and will stand and sit closer to one another than the Germans or the Americans. There is total involvement in personal interactions (Hall and Hall 1990; Harris and Moran 1987). These differences in the context of a team working closely together could create potential areas of miscommunication and discomfort.

Stage 2: Crisis

The second stage in team development includes polarization on the part of team members over interpersonal and task issues, issues of power, leadership and roles; and development of objectives and goals. Communication broadens to include discussion of critical issues, problem-solving and conflict management.

Communication of Information. The issue of high context or low context cultures come to the fore in this stage. This is because high and low context influences the way information will flow within the team. Low context cultures tend to control information flow, seeing that an individual should be told only what he needs to know. In high context cultures, information flows from all sides, with everyone staying informed. Already being informed and aware of

issues, high context individuals become impatient with low context individuals giving them information they do not think they need. On the other hand, low context individuals, who have not had access to free information flow, are at a loss when high context individuals do not share enough information (Hall and Hall 1990:9).

Culture affects not only the information flow between individuals on a team, but also the way the information is communicated. Cognitive patterns are translated into communication patterns. If teams are to communicate effectively, they need to be aware of some basic differences. Cultures are sometimes divided along an East/West parameter to address analytical versus synthetic thinking patterns (Okabe 1983). Americans are a good example of cognitive patterns characterized by analytical thinking, where individuals analyze and dissect things into elements in order to understand them (Okabe 1983:27). The Japanese reflect the more synthetic thinking pattern where, rather than dissecting, they synthesize elements into a unified whole. Kaplan points out cultural differences in the nature of rhetoric based on thought patterns. English thought patterns are dominantly linear in their development, and this is reflected in the way they communicate their ideas. Parallelism is evident in Arabic rhetoric, while Asians, according to Kaplan, take an approach of indirection in discussing a subject. They look at it from a variety of tangential views, but tend not to address it directly (1983:212-213).

Condon (1983:64) provides a comparison of communication style between Americans and the Japanese. The way information is presented is in focus. The U.S. pattern is to make explicit, verbal presentations of information, requests or instruction. The Japanese pattern is to focus on the implicit, with non-verbal cues, with only some verbal presentation. Americans find vagueness and ambiguity in communication irritating. The Japanese find vagueness and ambiguity to be positive in that it gives latitude in interpreting the situation and avoiding conflicts. With Americans, the meaning is close to the surface of words. With the Japanese, the meanings often reside in the situation or context. They are to be read "between the lines" or in what is not said.

Group discussion and decision-making. When teams get together to discuss issues and make decisions, perceptions of what is actually occurring may differ among team members. Western individualistic cultures tend to feel that everyone is entitled to an opinion and that opinions should be freely shared. Not all cultures would agree with this view. Whereas Americans see discussion as connotatively neutral, Latin Americans may attach a negative connotation, viewing it as an attempt to change someone else's mind (Nadler, Nadler and Broom 1985:109). Japanese also find it offensive for an individual to urge

acceptance of her/his opinion as a course of action. Rather, he/she should use circumlocution and maintain a strict reserve (Stewart 1985:191).

Within a group context, Americans expect an opportunity to voice their opinions and influence group decisions. Meeting agendas allow formats for this type of discussion. In Japan, however, procedures and agendas are more a matter of ritual or ceremony, not necessarily a form for expressing individual opinions. This is true in other cultures as well, where group meetings, on the surface, held to reach a decision, may in reality only be a "public confirmation" of a decision previously made in private by the critical members of the group (Stewart 1985:191). These differing expectations as to the purpose of group meetings are one more source of potential miscommunication and conflict. Where some cultures see decision-making as a positive way of taking actions, others would rather depend on existing rules or precedents (Stewart 1985).

Information considered necessary to make good decisions may also vary from culture to culture. Along the East/West parameters, Westerners tend towards absolutism; they value realism, objectivity, specificity, and precision. Eastern cultures tend to value idealism and have greater emphasis on subjective ideas rather than objective facts (Okabe 1983). In the U.S. there is emphasis placed on factual information and adaptation to probabilities of events; Russians give more weight to value-laden concepts; and Germans are more deductive and theoretical in their decision making (Stewart 1985:189). Japanese will place more emphasis on the emotional level of communication. Mexican reasoning, according to Harris and Moran:

...incorporates some of the Spanish tradition, giving emphasis to contemplation and intuition. . . . (while) Arabs go even further in this direction by adopting an intuitive-affective approach in which people express their positions through appeals and emotions. Facts seem to take second place to feelings. [1987:105]

These differences could be problematic when discussing tasks, resources, goals and objectives or when the team is involved in problem solving.

Cultures appear to have tendencies towards various approaches to the decision-making process. Some cultures tend toward a consensus approach; others look more toward an authoritative approach. In a team situation, this would mean that some members might look to the team leader for decisions, while other team members would prefer to discuss issues until consensus among the team was reached. Asian countries lean more towards consensus than the U.S. But the U.S. is closer to this end of the continuum than the French or Greeks (Nadler, Nadler and Broom 1985).

Conflict management. When discussion, decision making, and problem solving are not effectively dealt with, conflict management becomes an issue. This seems to be a major component in all team developmental theories. This component becomes more complex when there exist culturally based differences in verbal and non-verbal encoding and decoding, as well as value divergences.

What constitutes an appropriate conflict topic; whether the conflict should be overtly expressed or harmoniously sublimated; what serves as the proper conflict attitude; and how the conflict ultimately should be resolved, all take on particular nuances within the larger webs of a cultural system. [Ting-Toomey 1985:72]

Communication becomes central in a conflict situation. It is the "means by which conflict receives a social definition, the instrument through which influence in conflicts is exercised, and the vehicle by which partisans. . . may prevent, manage or resolve conflicts" (Nadler, Nadler and Broom 1985:90). A cross-cultural conflict situation becomes even more complex due to potential misinterpretation of verbal and non-verbal behavior.

Ting-Toomey brings us back to the concept of high context and low context cultures to better understand how conflict is handled. She suggests that low context cultures are better able to separate the conflict issue from the person involved in the conflict.

Low context cultural individuals can fight and scream at one another over a task-oriented point and yet be able to remain friends afterwards; whereas in the high context culture system the instrumental issue is closely tied with the person that originated the issue. To openly disagree with or confront someone in public is a severe blow and an extreme insult, causing both sides to 'lose face'. [1985: 77]

Different cultures have a tendency to deal with conflicts in different ways. The Chinese tend to take a competing approach to conflict, seeing there always has to be a loser. Americans will tend to go for compromise. The Japanese, not willing to compromise, strive for consensus. The French develop a well-reasoned position and feel compromise is not appropriate unless the reasoning is faulty. For the Mexican, compromise becomes a matter of personal honor-honor which is upheld when compromise is not made (Harris and Moran 1987:95).

Adjustments and Adaptations. What does a team do when they have conflicting ways of dealing with conflict? As an American, my tendency is to say there must be an open processing of those differences in order for team

members to understand what is going on. However, the literature would indicate that the solution is not that straightforward. Other individuals from other cultures may feel an open processing of those differences would only exacerbate the problem. As was suggested by Gudykunst, in trying to overcome misunderstandings, we tend to use the very strategies which caused the confusion in the first place (1991).

Ellingsworth (1983) suggests that the longer an association exists between members of different cultures, the more opportunity there is for learning, and the more uncertainty about one another's communication styles and belief systems will decline. Therefore, the more the team interacts, assuming there is motivation to deal effectively with differences, the greater the understanding that will develop within and between team members.

Mutual adaptation to one another's communication style would appear to be necessary for intercultural communication to be effective. Practically speaking, however, individuals within a team must focus on their own adaptation. As Sorti suggests, there are two kinds of adjustments that are needed.

We must adjust or get used to behavior on the part of (individuals from other cultures) which annoy, confuse or unsettle us, and we have to adjust our own behavior so that it does not annoy, confuse or unsettle (them). [1990:15]

Stage 3: Cohesion

Team developmental theories propose a stage where group cohesion becomes evident. It can be expected in any team that individual members will bring different expectations regarding roles, norms and standards. It is necessary for the team to be able to establish acceptable team expectations.

Norms and Standards. The way tasks are carried out—goals, objectives, resources—need to be agreed upon by the team. Issues regarding procedures, quality and use of time may provide areas of potential miscommunication. For example, procedures are very important for the Germans. There is a strong feeling that there should be order in all things. They bring a great deal of persistence to their tasks, as well as their opinions. Procedures are much less important to the French than they are to the Germans, or to the Americans. The French approach is that if a rule or regulation gets in the way of achieving a goal, one needs to find some way to circumvent it (Hall and Hall 1990:106).

Commitments to a particular task, goal, or deadline may also be viewed differently among members from various cultures. Some cultures (including the U.S. and Northern Europe) would tend to say that commitments should be honored; people are expected to do what they say they will do. Other cultures

may believe that commitments "may be superseded by a conflicting request or an agreement may only signify intention and have little or no relationship to the capacity of performance" (Harris and Moran 1987:76). If team members are unclear as to the meaning of commitments, unmet expectations will undermine cohesion.

Consensus and Conformity. Literature suggests that both task and interpersonal cohesion are important in order for a team to be effective (Zacarro and McCoy 1988). This is achieved through consensus and conformity. Culture plays an important role in motivation for this achievement.

In a study by Schacter et al. (1954, discussed in Mann 1980:174) cultural difference in the tendency for groups not to reach consensus of opinion after discussion was addressed. In this study, lack of consensus was most prevalent in England (43%), Belgium (34%), and Germany (32%).

These issues of consensus and conformity may hinder the "teamness" of a group working together. They are issues the team members need to be aware of and to deal with in ways that are acceptable and effective in light of the particular team dynamics.

It must be pointed out that consensus and conformity, while important, need to be seen in balance with the importance of diversity. One of the dangers of conformity is that it may lead to overconformity, resulting in groupthink. Groupthink is a term introduced by Janis (1972) which refers to the deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from cohesive in-group pressures. As members strive for unanimity, it overrides their motivation to realistically appraise alternate courses of action. A multicultural team, with its diversity, would be less likely to succumb to the dangers of overconformity. However, if they do not achieve at least a state of moderate cohesiveness and feeling of teamness, they may face ineffectiveness and possible disbanding. On the other hand, if they are able to successfully work through these issues, they will experience the benefit of a creativity and perspective that will facilitate their effectiveness and success as a team and as individuals.

Conclusion

There are certain issues which any team will need to work through in order to operate as an effective and mature team. Personal and cultural diversity is a given in any team. However, the nature of that diversity will be team specific. It is important to remember that each team will be distinctive in the personal and cultural backgrounds of its members. Therefore the interpersonal dynamics will be team specific. Each team will have a unique set of positive and problematic potentials.

It is important to view the information gained from this literature review as a means of increasing cross-cultural awareness of issues which *may* need to be addressed by a team rather than as predictive of what *will* be experienced by multicultural teams. This information can assist a team in assessing what cross-cultural issues they are handling effectively, and what areas they, as a team, need to address and work on. This kind of self-evaluation should be an ongoing process. This will allow the team to see progress they are making as well as helping them to isolate issues which, if dealt with, will help them to be more effective in their interpersonal relationships as well as their task performance.

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